

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Religious Groups and Their Ties to the FMLN

5. The Armed Forces believe they have discovered a pattern of church-FMLN cooperation and links between guerrillas and religious workers.

-- Most churches are very active helping poor and displaced civilians in conflictive zones where the distinction between civilians and combatants is often fuzzy. On numerous occasions--including during the recent FMLN urban offensive--insurgents often hid in churches, and, usually posing as civilians, sought refuge in church-run shelters.

-- International humanitarian aid workers told [REDACTED] that various churches pass charitable contributions and food donations to known FMLN insurgents, [REDACTED]

-- In late November 1989, [REDACTED] said the Lutheran Church coordinated the return of a group of Salvadoran refugees planning to participate in the FMLN offensive, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that as of 8 November Baptist Church members were stockpiling food, medicines, and supplies for surgery, which the [REDACTED] speculates may have been to support the FMLN during the pending urban offensive. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicates a significant portion of FMLN funding does come from churches and church-affiliated social organizations. [REDACTED] church groups in some cases are aware their donations will reach the guerrillas. Insurgent factions also often infiltrate these organizations or recruit individual clergy in various congregations to raise funds for FMLN-controlled projects. The FMLN raises funds for itself by asking for double the amount of money needed to complete a given project, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Each FMLN faction [REDACTED] has a special relationship [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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with a particular church--the political wing of the Armed Forces of Liberation, for example, receives the majority of its funds from the Lutheran Church. [REDACTED]

7. Many military and civilian political leaders believe the Jesuits' support for the FMLN is critical to the continued survival of the insurgents. The Jesuits in El Salvador are the dominant intellectual force on the left and taught several FMLN leaders during the 1970s. Their teachings included revolutionary theory. Ignacio Ellacuria, former Rector of UCA and one of the six Jesuit priests slain most likely by members of the military last November, maintained close contact with the insurgent leaders and once boasted that as many as 100 UCA alumni belonged to a FMLN faction, [REDACTED]. During the FMLN offensive, the guerrillas [REDACTED] were storing arms at the UCA, and [REDACTED] indicates that the military had [REDACTED] that wounded FMLN fighters were hiding out there.

8. The Catholic Church has played the most important political role of all the churches in El Salvador. Many government and military officials believe that the frequent attempts by Catholic leaders to mediate talks between the FMLN and the government have boosted the guerrillas' political legitimacy both domestically and abroad. Catholic leaders in El Salvador also serve as intermediaries between the guerrillas and government officials, are known to meet privately with rebel leaders, and often work to expedite the evacuation of wounded insurgents or make other requests on their behalf. Moreover, many Salvadorans, especially the military, view any church criticism of the government as tantamount to support for the FMLN. [REDACTED]

9. The government is very sensitive to charges of persecution of religious workers, especially in the wake of international outrage over the arrest and deportation of foreign church workers in late 1989. As a result, President Cristiani ordered that all searches of church property must be approved by the Army High Command. Although no serious incidents have occurred since early in the offensive, relations between the churches and the security forces are likely to remain uneasy as the government continues to monitor closely church activities. Because the FMLN's November offensive indicated a low level of popular support for the insurgents, the military probably is even more convinced, in our judgment, that foreign support, especially from religious and humanitarian organizations, is crucial to the FMLN's survival. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]